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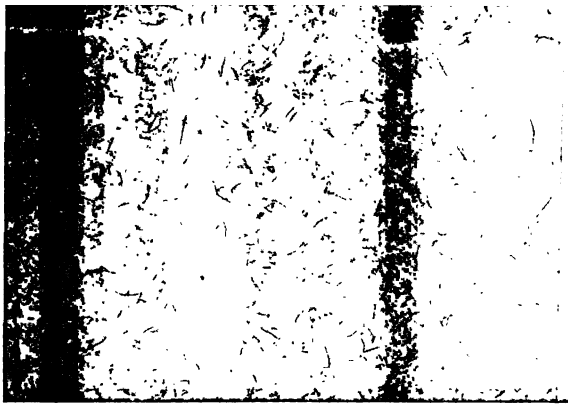

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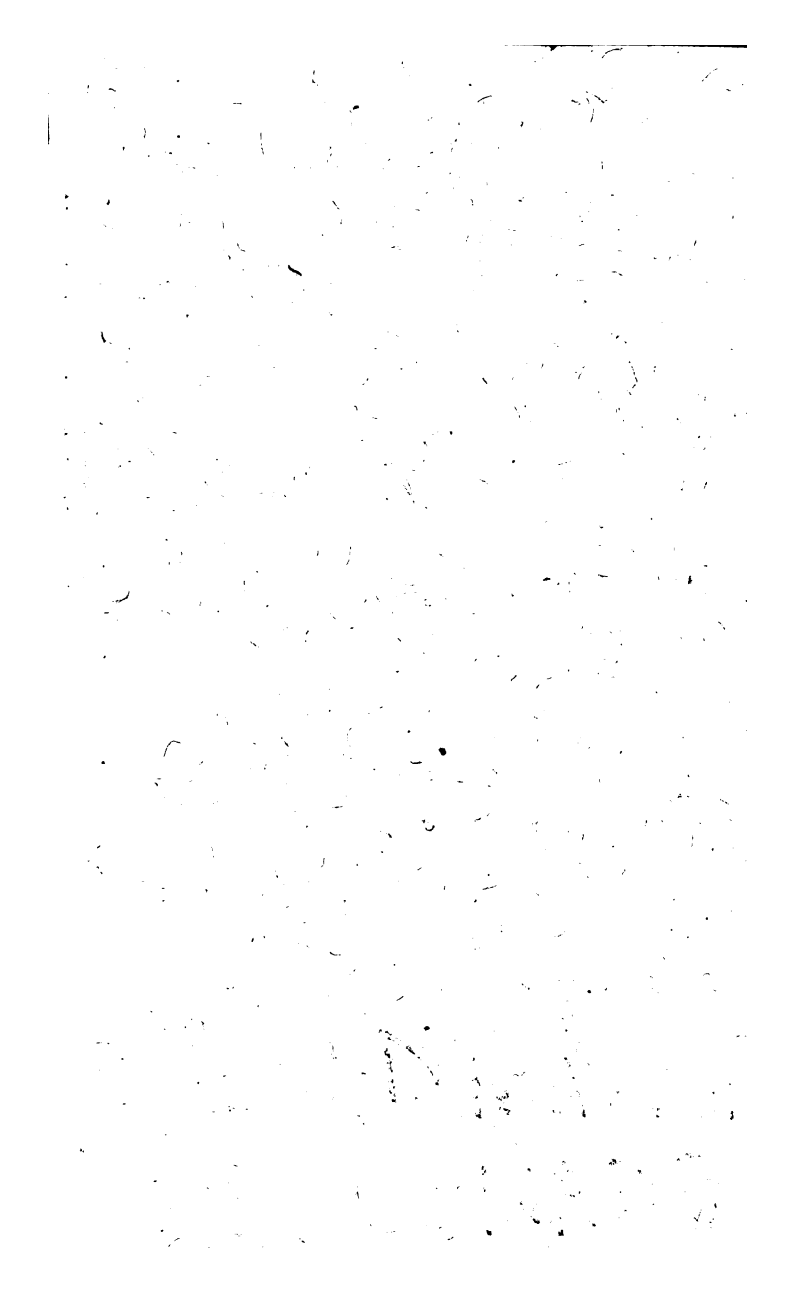

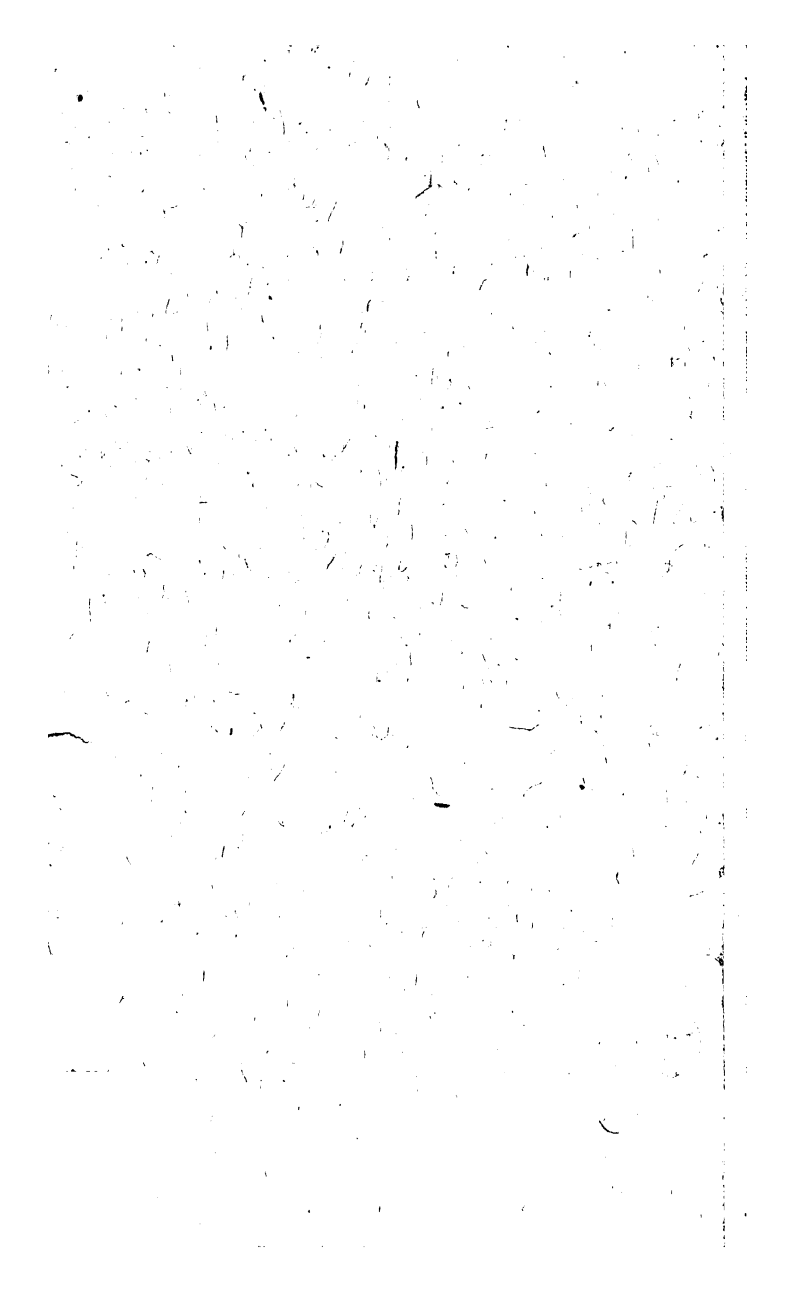

Modern Parnassus;

OR, THE

NEW ART OF POETRY,

A POEM,

DESIGNED TO SUPERSEDE THE RULES OF ARISTOTLE, HORACE, LONGINUS, VIDA, BOILEAU, AND POPE.

Et te, Phœbe, choris, et te dimittimus, Evan;
Tu quoque muta feræ, volucer Tegeæe, sonoræ
Terga premas: alios poscunt mea carmina cœtus.

Stat. Syl. lib. v. ecl. 3.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

IT is now generally admitted, that the Greek and Roman poets, together with those of modern times, who have copied their manner, ought no longer to be considered as examples for the youthful bard. Those critical compositions, therefore, which in an earlier age were drawn up, either in prose or verse, for the direction of the novitiate in poetry, inasmuch as the precepts, which they contain, are derived from the exploded models, must now be entirely useless, or,

what is worse, must mislead the pupil into a style of writing, which will defeat his purpose of gaining the applause of his countrymen.

Hence it becomes very desirable, that a new set of rules should be arranged, suited to the improvements and corrected taste of the present day; in order that they, whose genius or inclination leads them to cultivate poetry, may not only enjoy the advantage of having models to imitate, in the numerous poets by which the age is distinguished, but may also have a kind of manual, to which they may easily refer in cases of doubt and difficulty. This task I have ventured to undertake; and I assure the reader, that, however imperfectly in other respects it may be executed, he will find the pre-

cepts to be fairly and legitimately deduced from the most popular authorities of the day. One maxim of the exploded critics we still admit to be just; that the rules for writing in verse cannot be laid down by dint of previous reasoning, or, as the metaphysicians express it, *a priori*, but must be drawn from poems, which have been crowned with the greatest success, and which, therefore, we conclude to be the best. Thus, Aristotle, in the first art of poetry that was ever written, derives his maxims from the works of Homer; and our countryman, Mr. Pope, admits the propriety of this plan in the following lines of his Essay on Criticism,

Just precepts thus from great examples given,
She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n.

Waving therefore all claim to the in-

vention of the new poetic art, I merely take to myself the credit of collecting and methodizing the principles and maxims, which lie scattered here and there throughout the numerous successful poems of the present remarkable æra.

As in the schools of our universities every sentiment is uttered in a learned language, so, it is well known, that, in the school of the ancient poets, it was customary to use only the language of verse, even upon prosaic subjects. They therefore threw into a metrical form their art of poetry, which might perhaps have been more explicitly and methodically described in prose; and they preferred the didactic strains of Horace to the critical discourses of Aristotle. Hence it is, that, although a discussion in prose, upon the

principles and rules of modern poetry, has already been laid before the public*, I thought it due to the dignity of the newly-endowed school of poets, that, like the ancients, they should have (if I may so express myself) a poetical grammar, in which the pupil may learn the elements of his art.

It were to be expected, that my verse should have been itself an illustration of the rules which it prescribes, after the manner of Longinus, who "is himself the great sublime he draws." But (as the reader will find in the fifth part of the poem), not being able to root entirely from my mind a lingering fondness for the models upon which my youthful judgment was formed, I thought, that the

* Preface to Mr. Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads.

lenient public, if I resembled the moderns in the spirit of my composition, would excuse me for giving it an old fashioned form.

It may possibly be objected to me, by the modern sect of poets, that I had no right to consider Mr. Scott and lord Byron as belonging to their party, because the one paints the visible forms of nature, whether animate or inanimate, with the pencil of Spencer; and the other develops the deep and dark passions of the mind with the touches of a Greek tragedian. I subscribe to the justice of the premises, but deny the validity of the conclusion. Though, in some respects, those writers have not abandoned the ancient prejudices; yet, in others, they have both discovered so obvious a leaning

towards the modern improvements, that we may in justice consider them as good authority for establishing some clauses of the new digest of poetical law.

It has been no small consolation to me, while I have been labouring in the execution of my plan, to think that I might be instrumental in making the road to poetical honours still more easy than it was before; and that, instead of being shadowed forth as formerly, by a steep, it may henceforth be represented by a gentle descent, "so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming*."

* Milton on Education.

Already the repeal of the harsh decrees and penalties has emboldened a great number of young people of both sexes to practise the lyre, who formerly would never have thought of striking a single note. It is possible that I may add more to the number, and have the satisfaction of knowing, that some few, at least, encouraged and assisted by my plain and easy maxims, have risen above the level which seemed to be their place in society, and have been so happy as to publish a second or even a third edition of their poems with increasing applause.

It must not be disguised, that there are, especially at our universities, a few recusants, who cannot be proselyted to the new poetical faith, and who rail against

what they term "the heresies" of the reformers of our poesy*. To them I more particularly address the present work; and I request them to weigh with serious attention, on one hand, the advantages which the poet enjoys under the new regulations, in point of ease, emolument, and fame; and, on the other, the large quantity of pleasure†, which has been

* "We wish we could entertain any tolerable hopes of converting him from the '*damnable heresies*,' into which he has fallen, and to which, if he does not reform speedily, we fear his reputation will die a martyr."

Ed. Review of Southey's Curse of Kehama.

† The author of the Lyrical Ballads, who expected to please a great number, says, "The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that *I have pleased a greater number than I ventured to hope I should please.*

Preface to Lyrical Ballads.

communicated to multitudes of readers, who are entirely insensible to the beauties of ancient song. If, influenced by these considerations, any of the malecontents should abjure their disaffection, and join the standard of the successful party, I shall deem it the most honourable reward of my labour, and the most splendid part of my triumph.

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MODERN PARNASSUS;

OR, THE

NEW ART OF POETRY.

PART I.

THE REFORMATION.

. . . . . nunc ego mitibus
Mutare quæro tristia.

Hor. Car. lib. i, ode 16.

ARGUMENT.

Happy Change of Times—Courtesy of modern Readers—Ancient Edict repealed—Subsequent Increase of Poets—Fate of Codrus bewailed—Reputation of Poets dependent on the Age in which they live.

GONE are those unblest times, when niggard Fame
Allow'd to few the Poet's sacred name;
When Genius, trembling with unmanly fear,
Claim'd not the wreath, which he deserv'd to wear,
Till nine long years* had lent their tedious aid,
To touch the forms his magic hand pourtray'd;

* The time prescribed by Horace for suppressing a composition for the purpose of improvement, is somewhat abridged by Vida; but, according to the latter, it is at least three years.

Tuque adeo vitæ usque memor brevioris, ubi annos
Post *aliquot* (neque enim numerum, neque tempora pono
Certa tibi) addideris decoris satis atque nitoris;
Rumpe moras, opus ingentem dimitte per orbem
Perque manus, perque ora virûm, permitte vagari.

Poet. lib. iii, 528.

When Athens heard her pensive son display
His boast, of three immortal lines a day;
When Maro doom'd, with his expiring sigh,
Troy's second glory, like the first, to die;
Afraid, as he had held the lyre so long,
Lest some rude note had marr'd the matchless song:
Gone are those unblest times, for ever flown,
Which bade the Poet wear a hard-earn'd crown.
See glorious days arise, a golden age,
Which calls to fame the humbler minstrel's page.
Bound by no rules, the courteous reader now
Is pleas'd, he knows not why, and cares not how.
Call'd to partake the plain but plenteous feast,
He loves his host, a cheerful grateful guest;
Nor asks a richer sauce, a choicer bowl,
To lure the taste, or raise th' exhausted soul.

With easy change, he breathes the tender sigh,
Or melts to tears, or wakes to ecstacy,
. . . .
At every author's bidding *, and repays,
With loud acclaim, e'en Bloomfield's lowly lays.
Too just to wish, that all who boast a lyre,
Thunder'd with Milton's voice, or flash'd with
Shakspear's fire.

* It must be allowed that this generous determination to be pleased was not wholly unknown in former times; but it was never hailed with equal acclamation, and was soon ill naturedly laughed out of countenance.

. . . . . Ainsi qu'en sots auteurs,
Notre siècle est fertile en sots admirateurs:
Et sans ceux que fournit la ville et la province,
Il en est chez le duc, il en est chez le prince.
L'ouvrage le plus plat a, chez les courtisans,
De tout temps rencontré de zélés partisans;
Et pour finir enfin par un trait de satire,
Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire.

BOILEAU, L'ART. POET. ch. i.

'Tis order'd, in the ancient critic code,

Half up Parnassus, none shall find abode*.

* It is truly astonishing to observe what pains were taken by the poetical critics of the ancient school to enforce this doctrine, as if they had foreseen with envy that their posterity would one day or other throw off the yoke. Monsieur Boileau is not satisfied, like Horace and Pope, with a single mention of it, but brings it forward in two places.

Et ne savez-vous pas, que sur ce mont sacré,
Qui ne vole au sommet, tombe au plus bas dégré :
Et qu'à moins d'etre au rang d'Horace, ou de Voiture,
On rampe dans la fange avec l'Abbé de Pure ?

Sat. ix, 24.

Il est dans tout autre art des dégrés differens,
On peut avec honneur remplir les seconds rangs:
Mais dans l'art dangereux de rimer et d'écrire,
Il n'est point de dégrés du médiocre au pire.
Les vers ne souffrent point de médiocre auteur,
Ses ecrits en tous lieux sont l'effroi du lecteur.

L'Art. Poet. ch. iv.

If thou canst gain the mountain's topmost brow,
Then tempt the steep, or else remain below.
" Critics, and Gods, and Columns," all agree,
In strictest league, t' enforce the harsh decree.
We bold reformers laugh the creed to scorn,
By which old times would bind the times unborn;
We mock the terrors, which, in darker age,
Appall'd the Bard, and curb'd his gen'rous rage;
And, bless'd with clearer light, annul the law,
Which Greece pronounc'd, and Latium heard with awe.
The midway track, at length redeem'd from scorn,
The guards disbanded, and the fences torn,
Our brighter æra consecrates the soil,
And bids the panting Bard here end his toil.

Why farther strive, o'er Alpine heights to rise,
To win, what here is won, the laureate prize?
Behold what myriads rush and claim the ground!
Their lyres new string, their brows with chaplets
crown'd.
Here tott'ring age and jocund youth repair,
Here flock, in num'rous bands, the gentle fair;
Here, glitt'ring rank and low-born labour join,
And, side by side, peal forth the echoing line.
In artless mood, no nurse or tutor near,
E'en childhood lisps spontaneous numbers here.
Whene'er you list, fresh voices rend the air,
Where'er you turn, a choral crowd is there.
The Heav'n, the Rocks, the waving Groves re-
ply;
'Tis one grand orchestra of varied minstrelsy.

Ah! if those Bards had fall'n on other times,
The haughty Muse had spurn'd their proffer'd
rhymes,
Had scourg'd them down her mountain's hallow'd
side,
Their lyres all broken, and their wreaths untied;
In mute distress, had lock'd each tuneful tongue,
And Earth had miss'd full many a well known
song.

In early days, when Codrus, hapless name!
Rais'd his bold voice, and sung of Theseus' fame,
While brethren Bards, with lyres of equal string,
Made Fronto's plains and marble arches ring;
'Twas not enough, the Muse despis'd their strains,
She doom'd the culprits to her heaviest pains,

Who dar'd, without the true Promethean fire,
Infest her bow'rs and tempt her dang'rous lyre.
Their epics, odes, and elegies unknown,
Of all the vocal host, one name alone;
Immortal Codrus lives, to tell their crime,
And blaze their punishment to latest time.
If hapless Codrus, and that injur'd band *,
Reserv'd by Fate, now grac'd our favour'd land;

* The account of these unfortunate poets is found in the opening page of Juvenal, and is thus most effectually forced upon the notice of every reader. He who has seen only the first fourteen lines of that unmerciful satirist, knows their unhappy fate. One seems to have laboured most abundantly for fame. The Orestes, we are told, filled an immense volume, first written from beginning to end, then as close as possible over the margin of every page, and finally on the covers and even the back. Yet, after all, it was only a fragment.

. . . . . summi plenâ jam margine libri
Scriptus et in tergo, necdum finitus Orestes.

Whose rapture would prevail, 'tis hard to say,
Theirs who rehears'd, or ours who heard the lay.
They proud to sing, and we well pleas'd to hear,
The willing voice would find the patient ear.
By mutual compact they would furnish lays,
And we the large return of grateful praise.
Thus on an earlier or a later date,
By strange caprice, is hung the Poet's fate.
Minstrels once loath'd and stigmatiz'd with shame,
Born in our days, had soar'd to heights of fame;
And those whose verse enchants this gentle age,
The ancient Muse had lash'd with fiercest rage.

PART II.

THE NEW CHARTER.

Vos lene consilium datis, et dato
Gaudetis.

Hor. Car. lib. iii, ode 4.

ARGUMENT.

Genius not essential for the modern Poet—Versification and Rhyme—Varied Measures—No Measure—Effects of versified Novels—Speed in Writing—Profit attending it.

VARIOUS the claims, which modern times admit,
To poet's fame, besides the claim of wit.
What though wild Fancy droop her sportive wings,
Nor bless th' invoking Minstrel while he sings;
What though the words, adorn'd with lavish art,
Still want the secret spell, which rules the heart,
The breathing spirit want, th' informing soul,
Which lives, and moves, and kindles through the whole:
Yet 'tis some praise, in cadence meet to join,
The measur'd clauses of the well-pois'd line *.

* I have adduced a specimen of this kind of poetry, from Mr. Montgomery's Wanderer of Switzerland. The fifth

Sure, music dwells within the soul, that fears
To wound, with rugged phrase, melodious ears;
Nor in rough dialects, of northern clime,
Leaves through the lay one harsh, or ill-match'd
rhyme.
Oft, fond of change, the lines with fitful chase,
As in brisk dance, their varying figures trace.

edition of that work must afford great encouragement to all, whose chief or sole reliance is on versification.

SHEP. Man of suff'ring, such a tale
Would wring tears from marble eyes!
WAND. Ha! my daughter's cheek grows pale!
WS. WIFE. Help!—Oh, help!——my daughter dies!
WAND. Calm thy transports, O, my wife!
Peace, for these sweet orphans' sake!
WS. WIFE. Oh, my joy! my hope! my life!
Oh, my child! my child! awake!

Page 47.

Now in gay Lyrics trip, and now more slow,
Linger in steps of Elegiac woe.
Now in Heroics sweep with grand array,
And now in rapid Dactyls speed away *.

Hail too advent'rous Bard, whose freeborn soul
Bids the wild numbers rove without controul,
Whose verse nor rhyme, nor time, nor measure knows;
An untaught ear would deem it lofty prose;
And prose it were, unless, now short now long,
Th' unequal lines proclaim'd the pomp of song †.

* The specimens are before every reader in the "Lay of the last Minstrel," "Curse of Kehama," &c. &c.

† Although Thalaba the Destroyer is pretty generally known, I shall produce an illustration of the above rule, taken at random from that singular work: premising, how-

But oh the joy each lab'ring bosom feels,
When some kind Bard a wondrous tale reveals,
Of lovely maidens and of sighing swains,
Of rival chieftains and ensanguin'd plains.

ever, that we, of the modern school, may think ourselves happy, that we have been able to retain Mr. Southey on our side. It is notorious, that the opposite party, aware that his talents would give splendour to any style, which he adopted, have employed their warmest expostulations and severest censure, to shake his constancy, and seduce his affections from the muse of his choice.

Not in the desert,
Son of Hodeirah,
Wert thou abandon'd!

The coexistent fire,
That in the dens of darkness burnt for thee,
Burns yet, and yet shall burn.

In the Domdaniel caverns,
Under the roots of the ocean,
Met the masters of the spell.

&c, &c. &c. Book ii.

If with no vulgar flight thou mean to soar
To heights of glory none have reach'd before,
To ravish kingdoms with thy promis'd strain,
While Censure rails and Envy pines in vain;
This is the secret, this the art sublime,
Ye Minstrels hear me—novels penn'd in rhyme*.
Who, midst a hero's dying groans, inquires
If Art adorns the lay, or Wit inspires?
What heart, o'erpow'r'd with weeping Beauty's woe,
Can coldly question how the numbers flow?
In soft repose, th' unconscious Judgment sleeps,
While Wonder gazes, or while Pity weeps.
E'en those, whose rough and barb'rous natures long
Despis'd the Muse, and spurn'd her sweetest song,

* All the most popular poems of the day.

Whose savage mood not Shakspear's self could tame;
Now sooth'd to softness, own their former shame.
Won by the tale, they join the list'ning train,
Honour the minstrel and applaud the strain.

The stripling 'prentice and the sempstress maid,
Who from their shops before had never stray'd,
Now steal unseen along the Muse's grove,
To catch her strains and hear of war and love.
For they can judge, if lovers rightly sigh,
If warriors bravely fight and nobly die.
They, too, through trains of thick adventure led,
By turns feel joy, and hope, and grief, and dread.
The scene once open'd, all the actors shown,
And each well scann'd until the hero's known;

The beating heart no more can find repose,
Till the plot ripen, and the action close.
With breathless haste, from scene to scene they fly,
Nor quit the hero till he wed or die.

Speed on, ye striplings; speed, ye gentle maids;
No frowning Bard your eager course upbraids.
Though thousand wings assist your rapid flight,
You cannot read so fast as poets write.
Whate'er was sneer'd of old *, 'tis wisely great,
A thousand lines to pen at one bold heat.
When thoughts, and style, and numbers are forgot,
Lost in the tumult of the thick'ning plot,

* Crispinus minimo me provocat, accipe si vis,
Accipiam tabulas, detur nobis locus, hora,
Custodes, videamus uter plus scribere possit.
Hor. lib. i, sat. iv, 13.

The cautious Muse, who lingers o'er the strain,
Consumes her wit, her toil, her time, in vain:
Loses the printer's fee, the nation's praise,
And grants but one, instead of twenty lays.

In truth, the Muse's is a thriving trade;
Who, as the Bard, is half so richly paid?
When funds are rising fast, and scarce his gold,
His children grown, himself now waxing old;
It is not wise, a moment to decline,
The ample profits of the well paid line *.

* The current price for lines, taken one with another, short and long, has been, I am told, half a crown each. The loss, therefore, must be very considerable, to a man of narrow fortune, if he suppress, for the space of a year only, a poem of half a dozen cantos, containing several thousand lines. It is glorious for the cause of literature, that

Each nice improvement, which his work delays,

Will cost him something both in cash and praise.

there is no longer any room for such remarks as the following:

Haud tamen invideas Vati, quem pulpita pascunt.

. . . . . Nunc utile multis,

Pallere, et vinum toto nescire Decembri.

Juv. sat. vii, 93.

PART III.

POETIC LICENCE.

. . . teneor patriæ nec legibus ullis.

ÆN. lib. ii, 158.

ARGUMENT.

Licence circumscribed by Ancient Critics—Unlimited now—Choice of Rhymes—Pleas for Poets—Contrast of Ancient Inhumanity with Modern Sensibility.

OFT the bold Minstrel shuns each vulgar theme,
The Hero's exploit and the Lover's dream,
And from th' unfathom'd deep of Nature draws
Her hidden wonders, and unveils her laws.
E'en those stern mandates, which condemn'd the Bard
To years of labour for a late reward,
Allow, midst harshest threats and heaviest woes,
A gleam of mercy here to interpose.
As if some Draco, drench'd with legal blood,
For one soft hour forgot his tyrant mood.

When Science woos the Muse, his mystic lore
May with new words increase the ancient store*.
Or, so the charter runs, may claim the aid
Of borrow'd speech, from distant climes convey'd†.
His native tongue enrich'd, too poor alone,
Shines with new strength and beauties not its own.

This was but glimm'ring dawn. Our glorious day
Grants ev'ry licence now, to ev'ry lay.

* . . . . . Si forte necesse est,
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rarum,
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis,
Continget, dabiturque licentia sumpta *pudenter*.
Hor. ep. ad pis.

† Usque adeo patriæ tibi si penuria vocis
Obstabit, fas Grajugenûm felicibus oris
Devehere informem massam, quam incude Latina
Informans patrium jubeas ediscere morem.
Vid. Poet. lib. iii, 272.

Britons admit no rule, but their desire;
They brook not slav'ry, even in the lyre.
Free as the mountain breeze their numbers flow,
And nor in word nor thought a barrier know.
Above all law, the Muse of modern song,
By high prerogative, can do no wrong.
Minstrel, whate'er the subject of thy strain,
Be it severe or gay, abstruse or plain,
With easy choice, select at will thy rhyme,
Or from domestic or from foreign clime.
Is loyalty thy theme? The patriot lay,
In Spanish notes, may chaunt "Viva el Rey*."

* How carols now the lusty muleteer?
Of love, romance, devotion, is his lay?
As whilom he was wont the leagues to cheer,
His quick bells wildly jingling on the way?
No, as he speeds he chaunts "*Viva el Rey.*"
CHILDE HAR. can. i, 43.

Is love thy subject? Let the dying swain,

To "pale Phingari's trembling light," complain*.

Would'st thou array thy hero in a coat?

Albania's sons will lend "the white capote†."

To grace the arches of a sacred aisle,

France gives "a fleurs de lys, or a quatre feuille‡."

* But others say, that on that night,
By *pale Phingari's* trembling light,
The Giaour, upon his jet black steed,
Was seen. . . . . .

GIAOUR, 467.

† And pensive o'er his scattered flock
The little shepherd, in his *white capote*,
Doth lean his boyish form along the rock.
&c. &c. &c.

CHILDE HAR. can. ii, 51.

‡ The darken'd roof, rose high aloof,
On pillars lofty, light, and small.
The keystone, that lock'd each ribbed aisle,
Was a *fleurs de lys, or a quatre feuille.*

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL, can. ii.

Our language, like our merchandize, demands
Perpetual tribute, from a thousand lands.
When harshest style with meanest thoughts is join'd,
Some plaintive plea subdues the reader's mind.
The Bard, perchance, is young, o'erwhelm'd with fears;
Forgive his faults, and spare his tender years.
Or want, not will, inspires his tuneful rage *;
'Tis alms to buy — you need not read the page.

* Poverty, so far from being formerly a recommendation to the courtesy of the reader, was regarded, with some cruelty, as a disqualification for writing poetry at all.

Quis locus ingenio: nisi cum se carmine solo
Vexant, et dominis Cirrhæ Nisæque feruntur
Pectora nostra, duas non admittentia curas?
Magnæ mentis opus, nec de lodice parandâ

Or love* has led his gentle mind astray,
From humble prose, to tempt the arduous lay.
Perchance, surviving friends deplore his doom,
And print his strains to grace th' untimely tomb.
Can Censure rail against the recent dead?
Is Pity deaf when mourning parents plead?

> Attonitæ, currus et equos faciesque Deorum
> Aspicere, &c. &c.
>
> Juv. sat. vii, 63.

Bishop Hall speaks with most unepiscopal harshness of those, whose want urges them to write mean verses.

> Such hunger-starven, trencher poetry,
> Or let it never live or timely die.
>
> Pratt's edit., page 284.

* A countryman of our own has celebrated the effect of "Two or three love letters writ all in rhymes;" nor has the circumstance been left unnoticed by an ancient professor in the art of gaining the affections of a mistress.

> At facies tenera ut laudata est sæpe puellæ,
> Ad vatem, pretium carminis, ipsa venit.
>
> Ovid. Amor. lib. ii.

If one soft plea the public favour gain,
And from disgrace protect the wildest strain,
Oh say, what honours may that Bard require,
In whose sad lot all pleas at once conspire;
Who, young, enamour'd, poor, and almost dead,
Writes for his fame, his mistress, and his bread.

Man feels for man by partnership of woe,
For human suff'rings, human tears will flow.
Of all distresses, none more wounds the heart,
Than his, who plies in vain the minstrel's art.
Better to pine in want, or writhe in pain,
Than pour, on listless ears, th' unheeded strain.
Yet, for his faults, how strong soe'er the plea,
Or youth, or love, or death, or penury,

No pity touch'd the ancient Muse's breast;
She own'd the worthy few, and scorn'd the rest.
Our gentle times, more true to Nature's plan,
Excuse the poet while we love the man.
O'er ev'ry fault, the decent veil we throw,
Nor vent the blame, which seals another's woe.

PART IV.

THE CONTRAST.

. . . . . gratior it dies
Et soles melius nitent.

HOR. CAR. lib. iv, ode 15.

ARGUMENT.

Ancient Toil and modern Facility in Composition — Difficulty of qualifying for ancient Poetry — Happiness of the modern Novitiate — Seclusion of the Poet professed — Choice of Subjects — Of Thoughts — Of Words — Praise of Simplicity.

HOW pleasing from some sea-wash't rock's tall brow,
To watch the lab'ring vessel toss below!
'Tis not the crew's distress, which gives the charm,
But danger seen, ourselves secure from harm.
Thus, with a grateful joy and pitying smile,
We view the ancient Minstrel's endless toil.
While, free from care, we pour th' unlabour'd song,
Despise the Critic, and delight the throng.

Of old the Poet's ills with youth began,
The boy bewail'd the woes, which vex'd the man.
The dread of Censor's frown, the fruitless toil,
The sickly hue, the waste of midnight oil,

The posture chang'd, the forehead prest in vain;
All spoke the mis'ry of the ancient strain.
The thought was natural, but then 'twas low:—
Give him a pen, his slave had written so*.
This was sublime, but then 'twas out of place,
Lines from their station oft are grand or base †.
The thought selected, after hours of pain,
In choice of words far greater pangs remain.
This suits the meaning, but confounds the rhyme ‡,
That matches both, but does not fall in time.

* Non satis est puris versum perscribere verbis,
Quem si dissolvas, quivis stomachetur eodem
Quo personatus pacto pater.
HOR. lib. i, sat. iv, 54.

† Sed nunc non erat his locus.
Ep. ad. PISO.

‡ M. Boileau was a remarkable instance of this perplexity.
Mais moi qu' un vain caprice, une bizarre humeur
Pour mes péchés, je crois, fit devenir rimeur,

But grant the words run smooth, the sense be clear,
At once to feed the mind and sooth the ear;
Some graceful touch invades the luckless strain,
Unhinges all, and brings the toil again*.

These needless tortures are to us unknown,
Slight is our labour, speedy our renown.
We have explor'd the royal road to fame,
Which ancient times misdeem'd an idle name.

Dans ce rude métier, où mon esprit se tue,
En vain pour la trouver je travaille et je sue;
Souvent j'ai beau rêver du matin jusqu' au soir;
Quand je veux dire *blanc*, la quinteuse dit *noir*.
Si je veux d'un galant dépeindre la figure,
Ma plume pour rimer trouve l'Abbé de Pure:
Si je veux exprimer un auteur sans défaut,
La raison dit Virgile, et la rime Quinault.
Sat. ii, 12.

* Sæpe stylum vertas, iterum quæ digna legi sint Scripturus.

Our Bard elect, a heedless happy boy,
Consumes his nights in sleep, his days in joy.
No irksome musings, oft revis'd with care *,
Exhaust his spirits or his looks impair.
His healthful cheeks their ruddy freshness keep,
As village hind's, who guards the mountain sheep.
His spirits riot with as warm a glow
As his, who tracks the game in morning snow.
Nor Aristotle's rule, nor Virgil's theme,
Curtails his play, or breaks his midnight dream.

* Happy deliverance from such servitude as the following lines bespeak.

Ah quoties aliquis frustra consueta retentat
Munera, nec cernit cœlum se tendere contra,
Adversosque Deos, atque implacabile numen!
Vid. Post. ii, 420.

Their very names perchance to him unknown,
Their maxims ne'er prescrib'd, nor models shown.
Self taught on native genius to rely,
He leaves the aid, which other times supply*.
With gay delight, he sweeps the easy lyre,
While parents urge him, and their friends admire.

At length, when time has thrown the manly vest
O'er the full stature of the Bard profest;

* The ease and happiness, which our youthful Bard experiences, in the disregard of all obsolete maxims, entirely gives the lie to the portentous denunciation of Vida.

Infelix autem (quidam nam sæpè reperti)
Viribus ipse suis temerè qui fisus et arte,
Externæ quasi opis nihil indigus, abnegat audax
Fida sequi veterum vestigia.

Poet. iii, 245.

A louder prelude, struck with fearless hand,
Proclaims, who charms his friends can charm the land.
If not condemn'd by Want's imperious call,
To the loath'd counter, or the toilsome stall;
Stretch'd at his ease, some lake's green verge along,
He pours to rocks and waves his careless song.
Or loves at noon on some warm slope to lie,
And "tranquil muse upon tranquillity *."

* And thus, my love, as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill, I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-clos'd eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance like diamonds on the main,
And *tranquil muse upon tranquillity*,
Full many a thought, uncall'd and undetain'd,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain.

COLERIDGE'S POEMS, p. 130, third edit.

Far from the din of towns and cant of schools,
He dwells with Nature and he laughs at rules.
He asks no sage's lamp, but her bright beam,
To warm his genius and illume his theme.

And when the Muse's frenzy rolls his eye,
Above, below, around, in earth and sky;
When Nature, true to Fancy's strong controul,
Spreads all her stores before his raptur'd soul,
'Mid the dark horror of the mountain storm,
The tossing flood, the cliff's gigantic form;
Or, if serener visions sooth his breast,
Vales and green woods in all their glories drest,
Love's tender vow and Beauty's soft disdain,
Seclusion's rest and Friendship's parting pain;
Amid this rich profusion, which the theme,
Cull'd from the rest, inspires his wondrous dream?

Oh censure not his choice, if, free from pride,
He takes the small and lays the vast aside,
Nature is Nature still, wherever seen,
In an owl's hooting *, or an ass's mien †.

* The owls have hardly sung their last,
While our four travellers homeward wend;
The owls have hooted all night long,
And with the owls began my song,
And with the owls must end.

WORDSWORTH'S LYR. BAL. fourth edit. vol. i, p. 128.

† Poor little foal, of an oppressed race!
I love the langnid patience of thy face,
And oft, with gentle hand, I give thee bread,
And clap thy ragged coat, and pat thy head.
But what thy dulled spirits hath dismay'd,
That never thou dost sport along the glade?
. . . . . .
Innocent foal! thou poor, despis'd forlorn,
I hail thee brother, spite of the fool's scorn.

POEMS by S. T. COLERIDGE — Piece entitled, "To a young Ass, its Mother being tethered near it."

From ev'ry theme alike, or grand or low,
As leaves on trees, unnumber'd thoughts will grow.
But lest these stores the wav'ring choice confuse,
An easy maxim guides th' obsequious Muse.
When wild'ring fancies crowd upon the brain,
Secure the leader of the airy train*,
Doubting impedes the freedom of the lay,
Augments the labour, throws the time away;
Looks like the abject toil of slavish art,
Shows more the thoughtful head than feeling heart.

* By this means you avoid the fatigue prescribed by the old writers.

Quinetiam angustis si non urgebere rebus
Cum fandi tibi mille vias, tibi mille figuræ
Occurrunt, tum mille vias, tum mille figuras
Nunc hanc, nunc aliam ingredere et mutare memento.
Vid. Poet. iii, 32.

What care the public for such needless pains?
They love alike our rough or finish'd strains*.
If all have equal praise, 'tis surely best,
To seize first thoughts; let pedants take the rest.

* The "Idiot Boy" of Mr. Wordsworth has had more admirers than the more elaborate composition, entitled "Animal Tranquillity and Decay;" in which the author, in spite of his system, has fallen into the style of what the malcontents would term the old genuine orthodox poetry.

The little hedgerow birds,
That peck along the road, regard him not.
He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression; every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man, who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought. He is insensibly subdu'd
To settled quiet; he is one by whom
All effort seems forgotten; one, to whom
Long patience hath such mild composure giv'n,
That patience now doth seem a thing of which
He hath no need.

Lyr. Ball. vol. i, page 7.

By easy boldness, Nature's works are known,
Her vot'ry's wonders should be like her own.
As from each subject thoughts unnumber'd grow,
So, thoughts provided, words of course will flow.
Toil his abhorrence, ornament his scorn,
No high wrought speech our Minstrel's thoughts adorn.
Rebels, he cries, to nature, fools of art,
Skill'd to pervert the taste, not move the heart,
Whoe'er ye are, that venture to defile
The pure conceit with misnam'd charms of style.
Those base utensils of the rhyming trade,
But mar the beauty they pretend to aid.
Oh sweet Simplicity! of rustic mien,
Whose household phrase is heard on village green *;

* Mr. Wordsworth's theory leads him to choose low and

Where hinds and cottage maids, at setting sun,
In talk and gambol join, their labour done;

rustic life, as the subject of his verse. He states several reasons for adopting the language of that condition. He contends, in his preface to Lyrical Ballads, that "such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation."

This is language, which might be employed with sincerity both by the advocates of the ancient and the modern school; but the meaning, which they would severally attach to it, would be far different. Mr Wordsworth's meaning is obvious, from his illustration of the doctrine in the Lyrical Ballads, which exhibit the character and language of Betty Foy, Johnny, &c. &c.

In pursuance of this plan of poesy, it would be easy, in a future edition of Milton's Poems, to expunge the Arca-

Be thou the Poet's muse! thy aid I crave,

From Art's false glare thy suppliant's numbers save.

dian names, by which he attempted to elevate the thought, and soften the style; and to substitute, in their place, the Christian and sirnames, which are used in common life.

THE OLD WAY.

Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their sav'ry dinner set,
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then, in haste, her bow'r she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves.

IMPROVED VERSION.

Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where *Harry Gill* and *Johnny* met,
Are at their sav'ry dinner set,
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed *Betty* dresses;
And then, in haste, her bow'r she leaves,
With *honest Giles* to bind the sheaves.

This improvement of style seems to have been adopted

So may all Bards abjure the fabled nine,
And duteous bend before thy unhewn shrine.
Had Maro felt thy pow'r, his labour'd strain
Would flow in thoughts more common, phrase more plain.
Dido in homelier speech would mourn her fate,
And homelier numbers Troy's last woes relate.

by some cotemporaries of M. Boileau, who speaks of the circumstance with his usual prejudice against innovation.

Au contraire, cet autre, abject dans son langage,
Fait parler ses Bergers, comme on parle au village.
Ses vers plats et grossiers, dépouillés d'agrément,
Toujours baisent la terre, et rampent tristement.
On dirait que Ronsard sur ses pipeaux rustiques
Vient encor fredonner ses Idylles gothiques,
Et changer, sans respect de l'oreille et du son,
Lycidas en Pierrot, et Phyllis en Thoinon.

L'Art. Poet. chan. ii.

PART V.

THE APOLOGY.

Unum hoc, per si qua est victis venia.

Æn. lib. x, ad fin.

ARGUMENT.

The Author's Reason for writing — Excuse for deviating from the Modern Form — Early Prejudices at School and at College — He deprecates the Displeasure of Modern Critics.

BOLD, by th' indulgence of these courteous times,
I seize the lyre, and chant my maiden rhymes.
Though Art disown me, and the fertile vein
Of mother-wit forsake my feeble strain,
Though Critics threaten, friends approve me not,
My verse old fashion'd and without a plot;
In spite of Art, in frowning Nature's spite,
In spite of all, I still resolve to write.
I snatch th' auspicious moment, while I may,
Secure of glory, pour the welcome lay.
Thousands will hear, and grant th' approving smile,
The haughty few may vent their spleen the while *.

* If I were desired to give the most instruction in the

Yet, wise reformers of our cloudless days,
I crave your pardon, while I court your praise.
The eye, unveil'd at once to floods of light,
Demands some time to clear the dazzled sight.
Bred in the ancient faith, my heart still feels
Some rev'rence for the creed your zeal repeals.

A much lov'd Tutor taught my youth the page,
Which sings the fierceness of Achilles' rage*;

fewest words, to the poetical student, I should say, *reverse the ancient maxims*, as in the present instance.

. . . . neque te ut miretur turba, labores
Contentus paucis lectoribus . . . . .
Plotius et Varius, Mæcenas, &c.

Hor. lib. i, sat. x, ad fin.

* Exactly the same system of education, it will be observed, as prevailed in ancient times, and calculated to instil the same prejudices.

Romæ nutriri mihi contigit atque doceri,

His labours taught whom Fate
From Troy's burnt tow'rs, t
home.
And oft, of sport beguil'd, in
Dryden and Pope! I own'd y
And thine, great Bard! wh
display'd,
Man's first offence, and Eden
Isis then saw me tread, with w
Her winding banks, the Muse
Here hoary Science taught m
Truth's genuine light with Fals

Iratus Graiis quantum nocui
Adjecêre bonæ paullo plus
Scilicet ut possem curvo dig
Atque inter sylvas Academi

Gave me to scan each ancient sage's theme,
Zeno's stern rule, and Plato's learned dream.
Here, too, with letter'd friends, of heart sincere,
Unknown to fame, but not to me less dear;
Whom Heav'n still spares to bless my riper days,
Kind in their blame, and honest in their praise;
Full oft I lov'd to sooth the weary hour,
And lose the toil of Thought in Friendship's pow'r.
Ere yet soft Eve had clos'd the summer day,
Or gloomy Winter trimm'd the taper's ray,
Learning withdrew, his bow with care unstrung,
And the gay hall with lively converse rung.
"Pray what new work to day?" "Another strain!"
"The author? subject? title? style? explain."

" Soft, soft my friend, go ask some brib'd Review,
" And then to Fame's third Heav'n the Bard pursue.
" Oh, if another Judge, of spotless name,
" Could try his merits and award his fame;
" Could Flaccus wake from Death's unbroken sleep,
" The Judge would laugh — the Modern Bard would weep."

Thus train'd in doctrines of th' exploded school,
I judg'd of modern song by ancient rule.
If Horace told me, that the verse should flow
Concise and clear, I thought it must be so.
If he advis'd, to choose each theme with care,
As genius prompts, or as our strength will bear;
The man, who scarce a birthday ode could frame,
Yet dar'd an epic, was, I thought, to blame.

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If he declar'd, it was the Poet's art
T' inform the judgment * and improve the heart,
I shunn'd the Muse, which strove, with atheist song †,
To stab the wretched and corrupt the young.

* . . . . . orientia tempora notis
Instruit exemplis; inopem solatur et ægrum;
Castis cum pueris ignara puella mariti
Disceret unde preces, vatem ni Musa dedisset.
Hor. Ep. lib. ii, 1.

† Lord Byron covets the glory of being chiefly distinguished in the overthrow of this poetical canon; otherwise it might possibly survive the destruction of the rest. His lordship seems, however, to have had the twofold ambition of overthrowing the canons for *wit*, as well as poetry. His glory would be doubled, if, besides his exploits in verse, he could teach mankind to admire a species of wit, utterly unknown to Rabelais, and to him, who is named by the French *Rabelais perfectionné*, by the English, Dean Swift. I subjoin a specimen of the witticisms recommended by the noble lord's example. If I estimate it rightly, it dispenses with the

By his advice, I disapprov'd the lay,

Where sparkling tropes in wild confusion play.

With him, and all the wise of ages past,

I held, that grandeur differ'd from bombast;

That he, who fears to launch into the deep,

Is often tame, and makes his readers sleep;

That graceful ease and vigor should combine,

To stamp the full perfection of the line;

That clear arrangement, like the light of day,

Gives light, and life, and beauty to the lay.

difficulty of providing *point*, and *seasonableness* of introduction, and *novelty*. In the last confession of the Giaour, the attention of the reader is drawn from the hero of the tale to attend to the following observations of the author: "The monk's sermon is omitted. It seems to have had so little effect upon the patient, that it could have no hopes from the reader. It may be sufficient to say, that it was of a customary length, (as may be perceived from the interruptions and uneasiness of the penitent,) and was delivered in the nasal tone of all orthodox preachers."

Won by the verse and lore of ancient time,
Beguil'd in youth, amus'd in manhood's prime;
'Tis surely venial, if my heart retains
Some ling'ring fondness for these matchless strains;
If, while I bow before the Muse's shrine,
And at her feet present my humble line,
Some cherish'd relic of the once-lov'd song
Defile the off'ring, and affront the throng.

THE END.

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